

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 LUSAKA 0154

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TAGS: PINS, PFOR, AO, US

SUBJECT: UNITA PRESIDENT SAVIMBI'S CALL ON AMBASSADOR IN LUSAKA

1. SUMMARY: UNITA PRESIDENT JONAS SAVIMBI ARRIVED LUSAKA JANUARY 20 AND IMMEDIATELY CALLED ON PRESIDENT KAUNDA. LATER SAVIMBI CALLED ON ME AT HIS REQUEST. MAIN PURPOSE HIS CALL APPEARED BE UNDERSCORE URGENCY HE SEES FOR RESUMPTION/ CONTINUATION US AID TO FNLA/UNITA FORCES. THIS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IN LIGHT BOTH OF ANTICIPATED TRANSFER OF MPLA/CUBAN REINFORCEMENTS FROM NORTHERN FRONT TO OPPOSE UNITA IN SOUTH AND OF PULL BACK ALREADY UNDER WAY BY SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES FROM FRONT LINES. SAID KAUNDA HAD REFERRED TO MEETINGS WITH SOVIET AND AMERICAN AMBASSADORS AND URGED HIM PRESS FOR MORE US SUPPORT AS KAUNDA HIMSELF HAD. SAVIMBI ASKED US CONVEY MESSAGE TO SECRETARY KISSINGER THAT (A) US MATERIEL SUPPORT RECEIVED TO DATE IS VERY MUCH APPRECIATED BUT ANTI-MPLA FORCES URGENTLY NEED MORE TO HOLD LINE DURING CRITICAL NEXT TWO WEEKS AHEAD; (B) HE RECOGNIZES NEED WIN OVER AMERICAN PUBLIC AND CONGRESS TO CONCEPT OF SUPPORT FOR ANTI-MPLA FORCES BUT TIME IS GROWING VERY SHORT; AND (C) HE CONTEMPLATING PERSONAL VISIT TO US TO APPEAL DIRECTLY TO AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION BUT HAS BEEN ADVISED BY KAUNDA AMONG OTHERS TO DEFER TIMING UNTIL AFTER CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON MILITARY AUTHORIZATION BILL LATE JANUARY. SAVIMBI FLEW JANUARY 20 TO KINSHASA TO CONSULT WITH ROBERTO AND MOBUTU ABOUT WAYS TO KEEP NORTHERN ANGOLA FRONT ALIVE. END SUMMARY.

2. UNITA EXTERNAL AFFAIRS SECRETARY JORGE SANGUMBA TELEPHONED

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AFTERNOON JAN 20 FOR APPOINTMENT FOR SAVIMBI WHICH I READILY

GRANTED. HE ARRIVED AT EMBASSY ACCOMPANIED BY SANGUMBA AND ONE OTHER AIDE. SAVIMBI SAID HE HAD JUST ARRIVED LUSAKA THAT MORNING AND HAD MET PROMPTLY WITH PRESIDENT KAUNDA. ADDED THAT HE WAS LEAVING LATE AFTERNOON BY CHARTERED ZAMBIAN JET FOR KINSHASA WHERE HE INTENDED CONSULT WITH MOBUTU AND HOLDEN ROBERTO ABOUT SITUATION ON NORTHERN ANGOLAN FRONT. SAVIMBI SAID IT IMPORTANT THAT ZAIRE DO ALL IT CAN TO KEEP FNLA FORCES ACTIVE AND ENGAGED IN NORTHERN SECTOR; OTHERWISE, UNITA WOULD BE OBLIGED FACE MPLA FORCES ALONG WITH SOME TEN THOUSAND CUBANS WHO WOULD OTHERWISE TURN THEIR FORCES AROUND AND THROW FULL WEIGHT SOUTH.

3. REFERRING TO MAP, SAVIMBI SAID UNITA FORCES ALREADY ON DEFENSIVE AT FOUR POINTS ALONG FRONT. ASSERTED UNITA HOLDING ITS POSITIONS SO FAR IN DALA DISTRICT NORTH OF RIO KASSAI ON LUSO FRONAND AROUND MUSSENDE, CELA, AND PORTO AMBOIM. ADMITTED, HOWEVER, THAT HIS TROOPS BEING DEMORALIZED BY FIRE OF SOVIET-MADE 122MM ROCKETS AGAINST WHICH IT DIFFICULT FOR HIS MEN TO STAND. ADDED THAT ENEMY FORCES HAD ALSO RECENTLY INTRODUCED SIX HELICOPTERS INTO BATTLE AROUND CELA.

4. OF SPECIAL CONCERN TO SAVIMBI IS THAT SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES, MANY OF WHICH MADE UP OF YOUNG NATIONAL SERVICEMEN, ALSO WITHOUT TECHNICAL MEANS TO FACE UP TO THESE HOSTILE ROCKET BARRAGES. SOUTH AFRICAN COMMANDER HAD RECENTLY CALLED ON HIM TO ANNOUNCE MAIN BODY OF HIS MEN BEING PULLED OUT FROM FRONT LINES AND BEING REGROUPED IN REAR UNTIL FIRM DECISION MADE ON WITHDRAWAL TO SOUTH AFRICA. HOWEVER, SOUTH AFRICAN CONTINGENT WOULD PARTICIPATE IN JOINT ATTACK PLANNED TO RETAKE TEXIERA DE SOUSA. SAVIMBI FEARS THAT WITHOUT SOUTH AFRICANS (WHOSE PROFESSIONALISM, CONDUCT, AND MULTI-RACIALISM IN FIELD HE PRAISED) UNITA FORCES ALONG WILL NOT BE ABLE RESIST MPLA/CUBAN OFFENSIVE MORE THAN TWO OR THREE WEEKS.

5. SAVIMBI BRIEFLY SKETCHED OUTLINE HIS TALK WITH KAUNDA THIS MORNING. SAID LATTER HAD ACKNOWLEDGED QUADRIPARTITE MEETING IN DAR LAST WEEK REACHED COMPLETE STALEMATE, WITH NEITHER KAUNDA/KHAMA NOR NYERERE/MACHEL BUDGING FROM THEIR RESPECTIVE AND OPPOSING POSITIONS ON ANGOLA. KAUNDA TOLD SAVIMBI (AS HE HAD TOLD ME PREVIOUS NIGHT) THAT HE CONFIDENT TWENTY-TWO ANTI-SECRET

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MPLA AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS WILL REMAIN FIRM AND THAT POSSIBILITIES EXIST FOR WORKING ON SOME OF PRO-MPLA AFRICANS TO TRY BRING THEM AROUND TO MORE ACTIVE RATHER THAN JUST PASSIVE SUPPORT OF GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY IN ANGOLA. KAUNDA AND SAVIMBI HAD DISCUSSED DILEMMA POSED BY SOUTH AFRICAN TROOP PRESENCE IN ANGOLA. THEY AGREED LONGER SOUTH AFRICANS REMAIN, MORE DANGER THAN OTHER GOVERNMENTS WILL RECOGNIZE MPLA; ON OTHER HAND, WITHDRAWAL OF SOUTH AFRICANS NOW WOULD LEAVE MILITARY VACUUM INTO

WHICH CUBANS AND MPLA TROOPS WOULD MOVE. MILITARY DEFEAT OF UNITA/FNLA FORCES MIGHT THEN PERMIT ALL BUT STOUTEST AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS GIVE UP ON NATIONAL UNITY POSSIBILITY FOR ANGOLA. SAVIMBI IMPLIED THAT NEITHER HE NOR KAUNDA HAD BEEN ABLE SUGGEST CLEAR WAY OUT OF THIS DILEMMA.

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6. SAVIMBI SAID THAT KAUNDA HAD MENTIONED TO HIM BOTH HIS UNSATISFACTORY MEETING WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR BELOKOLOS JAN 19 AND HIS CONVERSATION WITH ME ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARDS (LUSAKA 0137). SAVIMBI CONVEYED IMPRESSION THAT KAUNDA HAD URGED HIM SEE ME TO PRESS AMERICANS STRONGLY FOR CONTINUED POLITICAL AND MATERIEL ASSISTANCE IN ORDER KEEP UNITA FORCES IN FIELD. I DEBATED THAT ZAMBIANS WILL ALSO BE APPROACHING OTHER FRIENDLY WESTERN GOVERNMENTS INCLUDING FRG AND FRENCH BUT EXCLUDING UK ("THEY HAVE NO MONEY"). I RESPONDED BY CALLING ATTENTION TO PORTIONS OF PRESIDENT FORD'S STATE OF UNION MESSAGE ON ANGOLA, TEXT OF WHICH SAVIMBI READ WITH INTEREST. I ALSO SAID SECRETARY KISSINGER CURRENTLY IN MOSCOW WHERE ANGOLA WOULD CERTAINLY BE ONE OF TOPICS UNDER DISCUSSION. I EXPRESSED HOPE THESE TALKS WOULD ENABLE US FIND SOME KEY TO CLOSING DOOR ON FURTHER SOVIET -- AND CUBAN PRESENCE IN ANGOLA AND ASSISTANCE TO MPLA. MEANWHILE, I SAID, I ASSUMED UNITA REPRESENTATIVES IN US WERE IN TOUCH WITH KEY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, PRESS, AND ESPECIALLY DIPLOMATS REPRESENTING THE TWENTY-TWO AFRICAN COUNTRIES OPPOSED TO MPLA TAKEOVER REGARDING WAYS IN WHICH FACTS ABOUT ANGOLAN SITUATION CAN BE GOTTEN TO AMERICAN PEOPLE AND LEGISLATORS. ALSO, I NOTED, IT IMPORTANT THAT AMERICAN PEOPLE REALIZE DEPTH AND STRENGTH WITHIN AFRICA OF DESIRE THAT US CONTINUE HELP ITS FRIENDS IN ANGOLA. AFRICAN LEADERS LIKE KAUNDA MUST THEMSELVES

SPEAK OUT ON THIS POINT. SAVIMBI AND SANGUMBA INDICATED THEY HAD TALKED BY PHONE WITH THEIR US REP (CHITUNDW) JUST A FEW MINUTES BEFORE; FOUND HIS TALKS WITH SENATOR CLARK SHOWED PROGRESS THERE BUT AGREED MORE NEEDED BE DONE ALONG THIS LINE.

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7. ASKED IF SAVIMBI HAD ANY MESSAGE WHICH HE WOULD LIKE CONVEYED TO SECRETARY KISSINGER WHILE LATTER IS IN MOSCOW, SAVIMBI RESPONDED WITH THREE POINTS: (A) US AID HAS BEEN MOST HELPFUL AND MUCH APPRECIATED, BUT EVEN SMALL ADDITIONAL AMOUNTS NECESSARY IF UNITA TO HOLD LINE FOR NEXT 2 - 3 WEEKS; (B) HE RECOGNIZES PROBLEMS US ADMINISTRATION FACES IN IMPRESSING AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION WITH ITS RESPONSIBILITIES AS WORLD POWER, AFTER BEING TRAUMATIZED BY LONG AND BITTER VIETNAM EXPERIENCE AND CONFUSED BY CONFLICTING VOICES ABOUT REAL SITUATION IN ANGOLA; HOWEVER, TIME IS GROWING VERY SHORT AND UNITA/FNLA FORCES MAY NOT BE ABLE WITHSTAND MPLA/CUBAN ONSLAUGHT FOR MANY MORE WEEKS; AND (C) SAVIMBI HAS BEEN URGED BY SOME OF HIS ADVISORS AND IS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING VISIT TO US IN HOPES OF APPEALING DIRECTLY TO US LEGISLATORS AND PUBLIC OPINION. HOWEVER, HE HAS ALSO BEEN ADVISED (BY KAUNDA AMONG OTHERS) THAT VISIT BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON MILITARY AID TO ANGOLA COMPLETED LATE THIS MONTH MIGHT BE REGARDED IN US AS INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS (UNLESS HE SUMMONED BY CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE) AND AN ATTEMPT INFLUENCE PASSAGE OF MILITARY PROCUREMENT AUTHORIZATION BILL THAT COULD PROVE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. HE THEREFORE WOULD WISH MAKE NO DECISION ABOUT VISIT TO US WITHOUT HAVING HAVING VIEWS OF USG ON ADVISABILITY AND TIMING OF TRIP. I ASSURED SAVIMBI THESE OBSERVATIONS WOULD BE PROMPTLY CONVEYED TO MY GOVERNMENT.

8. COMMENT: WHILE NOT WITHOUT HOPE, SAVIMBI SEEMED LESS PROUD AND SELF-ASSURED, MORE TIRED AND DEPENDENT THAN AT TIMES OF OUR PREVIOUS MEETINGS LAST YEAR. WITHOUT EITHER ASSURANCES OF CONTINUATION OF SUBSTANTIAL WESTERN ARMS ASSISTANCE OR SIGNS OF DIPLOMATIC BREAKTHROUGH WITH SOVIETS IN MOSCOW, SAVIMBI FORESEES BLEAK SITUATION IF NLA FORCES CONTINUE TO CRUMBLE AND IF SOUTH AFRICANS PULL OUT PREMATURELY. EVEN WHEN WE RAN OUT OF CONVERSATION, SAVIMBI APPEARED RELUCTANT TERMINATE MEETING, PERHAPS HALF HOPING THAT I WOULD BE ABLE PROVIDE SOME FURTHER COMFORT OR ASSURANCE ABOUT US POSITION WHICH HAD NOT ALREADY BEEN CONVEYED. I DID THE BEST I COULD BUT THERE NO DOUBT SAVIMBI FEELS HIMSELF IN A RACE AGAINST TIME AND WORRIED THAT MILITARY ASSISTANCE WHICH HE URGENTLY NEEDS WILL NOT CONTINUE OR MAY ARRIVE TOO LATE TO ENABLE HIM HOLD HIS PRESENT DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AGAINST OVERWHELMING MPLA/CUBAN FIREPOWER. CHONA'S DOUBTS ABOUT US CAPABILITY TO PROVIDE MORE RESOURCES

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MAY ALSO HAVE HAD ITS NEGATIVE EFFECT ON SAVIMBI.
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